

## Section 6

### Continuing Accreditation Policies

The policies in this section govern the Committee's procedural guidelines regarding the continuing accreditation of educator preparation institutions.

#### A. Accreditation Handbook

1. **Standards and Related Questions.** The *Accreditation Handbook* will include the Common Standards in Appendix 2 and the Program Standards for Options 1 through 5, as well as questions related to each standard. These questions will correspond to the Commission's adopted Factors to Consider, and will be designed to assist institutions in preparing self-study reports as well as team members during training and reviews.
2. **Guidelines for Institutional Self-Study Reports.** The Committee on Accreditation will recommend a format for the institutional self-study report and other materials such as faculty vitae and course syllabi to be submitted by each institution. The Committee will also provide guidelines for organizing exhibits and ways of facilitating the preparation, organization, and presentation of materials that relate to the Common and Program Standards.

#### B. Preparation for Continuing Accreditation Reviews

1. **Preliminary Report.** No less than twelve months before the scheduled visit, institutional officials prepare a *Preliminary Report* to be submitted to the team leader and the Commission staff consultant. This brief report describes the institutional mission and includes information about institutional demographics, special emphasis programs, and other unique features of the institution. The *Preliminary Report* is designed to help the Commission consultant and the team leader (in discussion with the dean or director) determine the type, size and complexity of the programs to be reviewed and the structure, size and expertise of the review team to be selected. The *Preliminary Report* includes, among other things, the following two components.
  - **Response to Preconditions.** In the *Preliminary Report*, the institution includes its response to accreditation preconditions established by state laws and the Commission.
  - **Indication of Selected Options.** In its *Preliminary Report*, the institution indicates the options it has selected for each credential program in the accreditation review.
2. **Institutional Self-Study Report.** No less than 60 weekdays before the visit, the institution mails sufficient copies of its *Institutional Self-Study Report* to the team leader and the Commission staff consultant, who distributes copies of the report to each accreditation team member. In responding to each applicable standard, the self-study report should emphasize quality considerations, educational rationales, and thoughtful program analyses.

## C. Conduct of Continuing Accreditation Reviews

1. **Accreditation Cycle.** The interval of time between accreditation reviews at an institution normally is five to seven years.
2. **Collection of Information.** The accreditation team gathers information about the quality of the education unit and credential programs at the institution from a variety of sources, including written documents and interviews with institutional administrators, program faculty, enrolled candidates, field supervisors, recent graduates, employers of graduates, and program advisors. Data collection procedures are governed by the *Accreditation Handbook*.
3. **Procedural Safeguards.** The accreditation team provides ample opportunities during the review for representatives of the institution (a) to be informed about areas where the standards appear not to be fully satisfied, and (b) to supply additional information pertaining to those standards. These opportunities include, at a minimum, a meeting at approximately mid-visit between representatives of the team and the institution's credential programs, after which additional written information or interviews are utilized by the team in reaching its conclusions.
4. **Specialized Credential Program Team.** If the accreditation team determines that the team lacks sufficient time and/or expertise to make sound recommendations for a particular program, the leader may call for a specialized credential program team to be named to resolve the uncertainty before the accreditation team's final report and recommendation is submitted to the Committee on Accreditation.
5. **Exit Interview and Report.** The accreditation team conducts an exit interview with representatives of the institution, at which time the team presents its findings and recommendations in the form of a draft report to the Committee on Accreditation. If a specialized credential program team has been called for, the accreditation status recommendation is not reported during the exit interview.

## D. Accreditation Reports, Recommendations and Decisions

1. **Accreditation Team Reports.** Accreditation teams make their reports and recommendations to the Committee on Accreditation. Accreditation team reports indicate whether each applicable standard is met, include summary findings and a recommendation to the Committee, and may include educational recommendations for consideration by the institution.
2. **Accreditation Team Recommendations.** An accreditation team recommends Accreditation, or Accreditation with Stipulations, or Denial of Accreditation. The team makes its recommendation based on the overall quality of the education unit and the credential programs at the institution. The team does not recommend separate accreditation decisions for each program. The team may recommend Accreditation even though the unit failed to meet one or two standards in Appendix 2. Alternatively, a team may recommend Accreditation with Stipulations, which may (if adopted by the Committee) require the institution to

fulfill all standards within a specified time not to exceed one year. Stipulations may (if adopted) require the discontinuation of severely deficient programs at the institution.

3. **Accreditation Decisions.** After reviewing the recommendation of an accreditation team and an appropriate response from the institution (see below), the Committee on Accreditation makes a decision about the accreditation of educator preparation at the institution, including a decision about the status of each credential program. The Committee makes one of three decisions pertaining to each institution: Accreditation, Accreditation with Stipulations, or Denial of Accreditation. The Committee's *Annual Accreditation Reports* summarize these decisions.
4. **Accreditation with Stipulations.** The Committee on Accreditation allows an institution up to one calendar year to fulfill all standards or to discontinue deficient program(s). The Committee also determines how the institution's response to adopted stipulations is to be reviewed. The Committee may require a second visit for this purpose. Failure to satisfy all stipulations results in the denial of accreditation to the entire institution. Upon the request of an institution, an additional period to remedy severe deficiencies may be granted by the Committee on Accreditation if the Committee determines that (a) substantial progress has been made and/or (b) special circumstances described by the institution justify a delay.

## **E. Institutional Responses and Appeals**

1. **Response to Committee on Accreditation.** Within twenty weekdays after an accreditation visit, the institution may submit evidence to the Committee on Accreditation that the team demonstrated bias or acted arbitrarily or capriciously or contrary to the policies of this *Framework* or the procedural guidelines of the Committee. (Information related to the quality of a program or the education unit that was not previously provided to the accreditation team may not be considered by the Committee.) The Committee may use this evidence to make a different decision than was recommended by the team. If the Committee makes such a decision, the leader of the team may file a dissent with the Commission. If the Committee decides that an incorrect judgment was made by a team or cluster, and that the result leaves some doubt about the most appropriate decision to be made, the Committee may assign a new team to visit the institution and provide a recommendation on its accreditation.
2. **Appeal to the Commission.** Pursuant to Education Code Section 44374-e, an institution has the right to appeal to the Commission a decision by the Committee on Accreditation to deny accreditation or accredit with stipulations. Such an appeal must be based on evidence that accreditation procedures by the team or decisions by the Committee were arbitrary, capricious, unfair, or contrary to the policies in this *Framework* or the procedural guidelines of the Committee. Information related to the quality of a program or the education unit that was not previously provided to the accreditation team may not be considered by the Commission. The Commission resolves each appeal pursuant to Education Code Section 44372-f.

## **F. Concerns about Credential Program Quality**

When one or more complaints about a credential program indicate that the quality of the program may be in serious jeopardy, the Executive Director of the Commission may investigate the basis for the concerns, provide technical assistance to the institution, or refer the concerns to the Committee on Accreditation for consideration of possible action.